

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 1303**

**RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine  
to Establish the Right to Hunt and Fish**

**SPONSORED BY:** Representative FREDETTE of Newport

**CO-SPONSORED BY:** Senator GOODALL of Sagadahoc  
Senator JACKSON of Aroostook  
Representative DAVIS of Sangerville  
Representative GUERIN of Glenburn  
Representative McCABE of Skowhegan  
Representative REED of Carmel  
Representative SHORT of Pittsfield  
Representative TYLER of Windham  
Representative WOOD of Sabattus

**DATE OF HEARING: April 30, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Andrea Erskine, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking neither for nor against **L.D. 1303**.

The Department supports this bill in concept but also has several concerns. The bill if passed as written would strengthen Maine citizens' rights to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife and prevent anti-hunting groups from encroaching on that right in the future. The Department strongly supports strengthening such rights of Maine citizens and applauds this goal.

The Department has several concerns with this Constitutional Amendment causing a real or perceived right versus a privilege to hunt and fish and taking this to a level that disregards the laws enacted to protect the resources. If the right to hunt and fish overrides the Department's ability to manage the resource in a meaningful way it could wreak havoc on the State's fish and wildlife resources and their populations. From a law enforcement standpoint it has potential to create challenges when suspending violator's hunting and fishing licenses and possibly hinder prosecutions. The Department would suggest having an opportunity to research the language and possible effects the bill may

have if passed. This could be accomplished and the results could then be reported back to the Committee in January of 2014.

Additionally, the Administration does not take lightly amendments to Maine's Constitution. Based on our underlying support for the concept of this Resolution together with the questions it raises, we strongly urge the Committee to convene a group to review this matter over the summer and report back. In that case all can be assured with the highest degree of comfort that the language and amendment achieves its goals in a workable manner.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time.